

ALEXANDER MACMILLAN.

A GREAT PUBLISHER AND HIS FRIENDS
—IN A CIRCLE WHERE A LITERARY
AGENT WAS NOT NEEDED.

London, January 29.
Alexander Macmillan, to whose memory the last honors are paid to-day at Branshott in the Haslemere district, was one of the founders of what is now one of the greatest publishing houses in the world. It was in 1839 that he came up to London to accept a salary of £300 a year, which his brother, Daniel Macmillan, had secured for him in a bookstore. He was the son of a poor Scotch farmer on the Ayrshire coast, and had been struggling to make a living in one way or another. He had sailed before the mast on a voyage to Quebec; he had been a salesman in a small bookshop; he had lived on five shillings a week; he had tried to study medicine; and at last he had taken charge of a small school at Nisbith near Paisley. It was a humble beginning of a business career which was destined to be crowned with honorable distinction and with literary friendships of exceptional interest.

The two Scotch brothers took modest lodgings in Holborn, with a sister at first to keep house for them, and not long afterward they moved into Charterhouse Square, which was not then as dismal a quarter of London as it is now. They had only a moderate education, but it was Scotch, and what there was of it was thoroughly mastered. They were natural bookkeepers, one with a taste for theology inherited from the father, who, poor peasant as he was, had loved a stiff Calvinistic argument; and the other with a strong vein for poetry and philosophy. To their peasant mother they owed their intellectual force and liberality of thought. Thomas Hughes describes her as having "a remarkable openness of mind, which expressed itself in such phrases as 'purr body, he has nae room in him,' when she heard of overzealous persons speaking bitterly of opponents; or when, to the scandal of many in Irvine, she started that to her thinking such of them as had the good fortune to reach heaven would have to put up with the company of many Romanists."

Daniel Macmillan was the leader, owing to his impetuous nature and superior energy. He proposed early in 1843 that they should set up business as booksellers on their own account, and when this was done, it was he again who, with the aid of a timely loan from Archibald Hare, bought out a book business in Cambridge, where the foundations of the great publishing trade of the Macmillans, with their houses in London and New-York, were really laid. The success of the enterprise was dependent in its earliest stages upon the friendship of Hare, Maurice and Kingsley; and it was Daniel Macmillan who commanded the support of these leaders of liberal thought by his controversial zeal and ardent sympathy. He was a brilliant and original talker, with an earnestness of manner and force of character which commanded respect. He was at once a bookseller and a missionary of liberal Christianity.

While the older brother was pre-eminently the founder of the house, the younger Macmillan during the last forty years has been mainly responsible for the control and direction of its fortunes. In 1853, the year following the untimely death of Daniel Macmillan, the new publications of the firm numbered only forty-four. Although Maurice's works and Charles Kingsley's and Thomas Hughes's books had been published, the business was still small and only moderately profitable. It was in that year that the publication of books was resumed in London, where the first volume bearing the Macmillan's imprint, A. R. Craig's "Philosophy of Training," had been issued fifteen years before. The Cambridge retail trade is still retained, but since 1863 London has been the headquarters of the publishing business, with a branch house in New-York since 1869, which has been for six years on an independent basis. The development of the publishing trade of the house has been the life's work of Alexander Macmillan, and it required mercantile enterprise and intelligence of a high order.

A STRONG PERSONALITY.

The distinction of excelling in the number of annual publications "the literary output" of any similar house at home or abroad is not one that needs to be enlarged upon. What is more interesting and important is the strong personality of this eminent publisher, because it has attracted the friendship of a distinguished group of English writers. Mr. Macmillan was not, perhaps, an original talker as his impulsive and enthusiastic brother, but he was something more than a sympathetic listener. His conversation had informing qualities and was characterized by breadth of view and refinement of thought. He was interested in many subjects outside the range of theological controversy—in science, philosophy, poetry and letters generally. He was a broad-minded man. Few publishers have ever established more direct personal relations between themselves and the authors whose works they sold. They were his intimate friends, and not only his house, but his heart as well, was open to them.

Hare, Maurice, Kingsley and Thomas Hughes were primarily his brother's friends, but they were his also. Matthew Arnold was a frequent guest at his table, and their relations were intimate. Lord Tennyson did not have the reputation of making many close friends, but Alexander Macmillan was one of them. Branshott Chase was within driving distance of Lord Tennyson's home, and publisher and poet saw much of each other. Lord Tennyson enjoyed reading his poetry to so appreciative a listener, and would recite it with his peculiar intonation, pausing once in a while to exclaim under his breath, "That is a fine line!"

The historians, Freeman and Green, were often at Mr. Macmillan's house, and were among his closest friends. John Bright was always a welcome guest there. It was from him and from Thomas Hughes that Mr. Macmillan took his part during the American Civil War, when the sympathies of the upper and educated classes were enlisted against the North. The publisher was as strong a partisan of the anti-slavery cause as two of his most intimate friends. Ordinarily temperate and conciliatory in conversation, he could hardly maintain self-restraint when any dispute arose on the Union cause. He made a journey to America after the war, going as far as Chicago, and opening the way for the establishment of a branch house in New-York. His relations with Americans were always cordial, but never so intimate as with his own countrymen. Lowell he knew, but he was an acquaintance rather than a friend. Henry James, whose books he published, was sometimes seen at his house.

THE FRIEND OF HUXLEY.

One of Mr. Macmillan's most trusted and confidential friends was Professor Huxley, who was often his guest. It is sometimes said that a literary agent is necessary, because an author, when he is a personal friend of his publisher, will shrink from discussing business details with him, and will inevitably make a bad bargain for himself. The relations between Professor Huxley and his publisher were never strained by business matters. The author had implicit confidence in Mr. Macmillan, and never entertained a suspicion that full justice would not be done. The publisher, on the other hand, owing to his strong personal friendship with Professor Huxley, was always anxious to favor him in every possible way, and to make arrangements for the publication of his books on the best terms for the writer. They were unsuspecting friends, and the broker was needed in the transaction of their business.

Llewellyn Davies, Aldis Wright, Henry Fawcett, Sir George Grove, F. T. Palgrave, David Masson, James Bryce, Dr. Vaughan, Archibald Trench and Canon Alinger may also be mentioned among his intimate friends who were often at his house; and among women, Mrs. Craik, Mrs. Oliphant and Miss Yonge. Mr. Gladstone, who was a frequent guest during earlier years, before public cares had multiplied and absorbed his attention; and a most cordial feeling existed between him and Mr. Macmillan. Until recent years, when the latter's health failed and compelled his withdrawal not only from active business, but also from social life, he had maintained

private correspondence with a large number of his literary friends. His letters were always written with painstaking care, and were conspicuous for lucidity of style and force of argument. His brother, owing to the arduous nature of his work, was a diffuse and impulsive writer. He himself was at his best in correspondence. Good writer as he was, he made no contribution to literature, but his judgment of the value of books and of the intrinsic merits of style was unrivaled among publishers. He had a natural and highly cultivated taste for good literature.

THE PUBLISHER'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Mr. Macmillan was not only a man who loved books and had quick perception and refinement of taste, but he also had strong convictions respecting the moral responsibility of a publisher to the public. He had high ideals and never lost sight of them. A shrewd Scotchman in his business dealings, he was too high-minded to publish books solely because they seemed to have qualities which would command a large sale. His standards were not lowered for sale. His standard was the judgment of the publisher, and he never acted upon the assumption that the morbid or gross requirements of public appetite released him from his responsibility to promote the interests of good literature. Associated with a publisher who had so true a sense of the dignity of his calling was an honor highly prized. Authors of distinction not only admired his accurate business judgment, but his first-class, his generous nature, and his amiable personal qualities, but they were proud to be numbered among his friends.

Indeed, the example of the two Scotchmen, who, without the early advantages of education, and with the peasant mother's keen, practical intelligence as their main resource, contrived between them to establish a great business and to rally around them the best literary workmen of the "Victorian" period, the noblest traditions of the publishing world. They succeeded because from the outset they took a high view of their vocation. Alexander Macmillan, who has been buried today, had been a loyal to his convictions and as true in his sympathies as the earnest, impetuous brother, who, when he was a shopman earning £400 a year, counted it a disgrace that he should be a teacher, and when, to the scandal of many in Irvine, she started that to her thinking such of them as had the good fortune to reach heaven would have to put up with the company of many Romanists."

Much curiosity has been expressed since the death of Mr. Houghton concerning the plans for the future of the firm of which he was the honored head. It is pleasant to discover that his aims have not changed; that it will maintain its reputation for cherishing the best native literature, and that all the distinction and refinement of workmanship that have characterized the "Victorian" period of the Press will be preserved and increased in the books that are to come.

Among the works promised for the spring by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. are several uncommonly welcome biographies. In the two volumes of "The Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes" John T. Morse has presented a delightful picture of a man who was interesting in his own right, and whose life, a second biography is that of Bayard Rustin, which is to be contributed to the American Men of Letters series by A. H. Smyth. The forthcoming volume on William H. Seward in the American Statesmen series is the work of Thornton K. Lothrop. "The Life of Thomas Hutchinson," in the same series, has been written by Dr. J. K. Hosmer, and in this volume, we understand, the reviewer of the "Boston Herald" has longed credit due to his character and high capacities. A new biography of Joan of Arc has been prepared by Francis C. Lowell, who has made a particularly careful review of her trial. "The Life and Letters of Elias Boudinot," edited by J. J. Boudinot, will contain many documents bearing on the history of revolutionary times. The additions made to his work on the "History of Prussia," by Professor Tuttle, of Cornell University, before the death, treating of the early part of the Seven Years' War, are to be published, with a biographical sketch, by Professor Herbert R. Adams. Among the books of fiction announced are "Tom Grogan," by F. Hopkinson Smith; "The Supply at St. Agatha's," by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and M. F. J. Stimson's "Pirate Gold." A volume of sermons and addresses by Bishop William Lawrence is to be issued under the title of "Victims and Saviors."

Dr. E. Winchester Donald's lectures, before the Lowell Institute last winter on "The Expansion of Religion" will appear in book form, and a series of essays on "Moral Evolution" has been written by Dr. George Harris, of Andover. "The Complete Works of Robert Burns," edited by William E. Henley and T. P. Henderson, in four octavo volumes, is to be issued in a limited edition. The list of readings includes a new book by Lafcadio Hearn, "The House of the Seven Gables," by William Root Bliss; "Spring Notes from Tennessee," by Bradford Torrey, and Rowland E. Robinson's "New-England Fields and Woods." Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller has written for children an account of various sorts of monkeys, with the title, "Four-Handed Folk," and the ninth volume of Professor Sargent's splendid work on "The Silva of North America" is nearly ready for publication.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

MARY MACMILLAN, by Edgar Allan Poe, 12mo, pp. 254. (United States Book Co., 100 Broadway, N. Y.)
FIRE AND SWORD IN THE SOUTH. A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Deceitful, 1860-1865. By William C. Cress. 12mo, pp. 312. (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 245 Broadway, N. Y.)
MAJOR F. W. WINGATE. Imperial 8vo, pp. 636. (Edwards, 100 Broadway, N. Y.)
CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY. By Enrico Ferri. Edited by Douglas Morrison. 12mo, pp. 284. (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 245 Broadway, N. Y.)
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